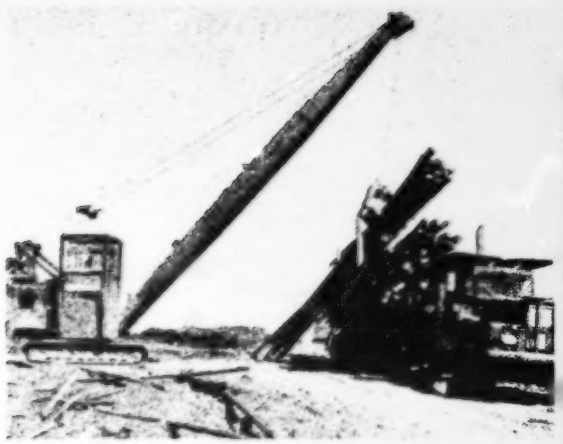
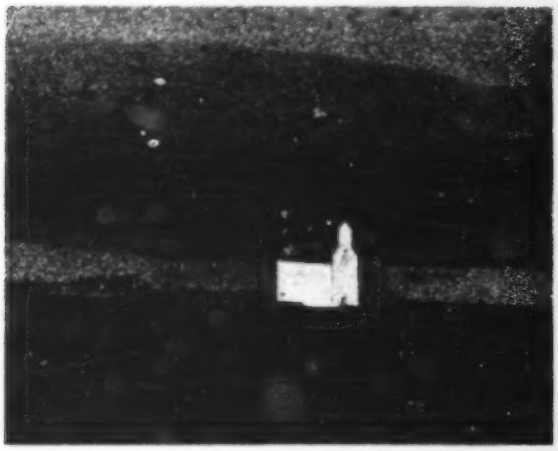
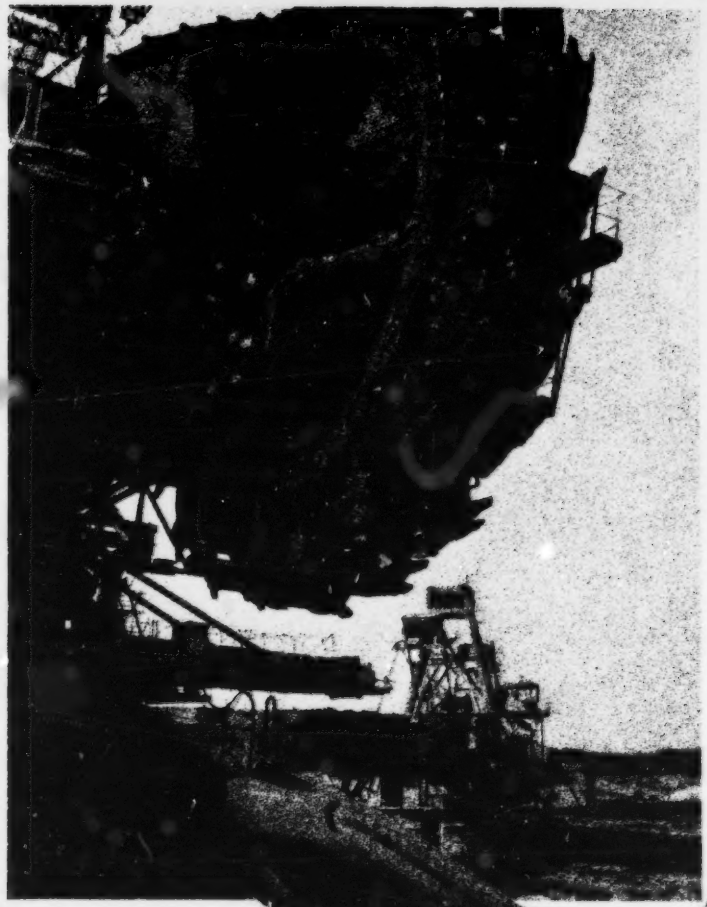






ANNUAL REPORT
1986/87

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

87-03957/

LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

2nd Floor, Provincial Building, 9621 - 96 Avenue, Postal Bag 900-14, Peace River, Alberta, Canada T0H 2X0 403/624-6274

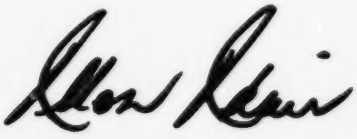
May 1987

To Her Honor
Helen Hunley
Lieutenant-Governor of the
Province of Alberta

Madam:

The undersigned has the honor to transmit herewith, the Twenty-third Annual Report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Respectfully submitted,



Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair
Minister Responsible for the
Northern Alberta Development Council

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

2nd Floor, Provincial Building, 9621 - 96 Avenue, Postal Bag 900-14, Peace River, Alberta, Canada T0H 2X0 403/624-6274

May, 1987

Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair
Minister Responsible for the
Northern Alberta Development Council

Sir:

The undersigned has the honor to transmit herewith, the Twenty-third Annual Report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Elliott

Bob Elliott, MLA
Beaverlodge
Chairman

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN

Dr. C.R. (Bob) Elliott, MLA
Chairman
Northern Alberta Development Council

In my first year as Chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, I am very pleased to report on continuing progress by the Council in its role of enhancing public participation in the development of northern Alberta.

During 1986/87 the Council presented a detailed position paper on crop insurance to the hearing of the Crop Insurance Review Panel in Peace River. Council also performed its advisory role to the provincial government by undertaking a number of meetings with Ministers and staff of various departments and agencies of government.

Examples of Council's ongoing role in information and research services to northerners involved distribution of "A Guide to Business Opportunities in the Oil & Gas Industry of Northern Alberta," a "Board Member's Handbook" for volunteers and a seminal report on aging in the north, "A New Beginning."

A major conference on an important topic was held in Athabasca in October of 1986. Over 100 northern business and community leaders met to discuss Telecommunications in Northern Alberta and a number of significant recommendations have been made.

A thorough review of Council activities and future priorities was also undertaken and should provide good groundwork to welcome three new members to the Council in 1987/88.

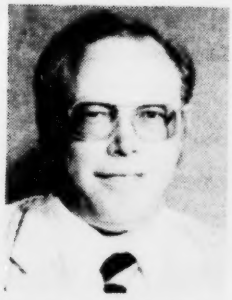
I look forward to working with them and the continuing members of Council on behalf of all northerners.

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL 1986/87

BOB ELLIOTT, MLA
CHAIRMAN
BEAVERLODGE

HON. AL "BOOMER" ADAIR
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT
PEACE RIVER



CEC JARDINE
VICE-CHAIRMAN
VALLEYVIEW

MARY BENNETT
ELK POINT

GENE DEXTRASE
HIGH LEVEL

JOHN DROBOT, MLA
ST. PAUL

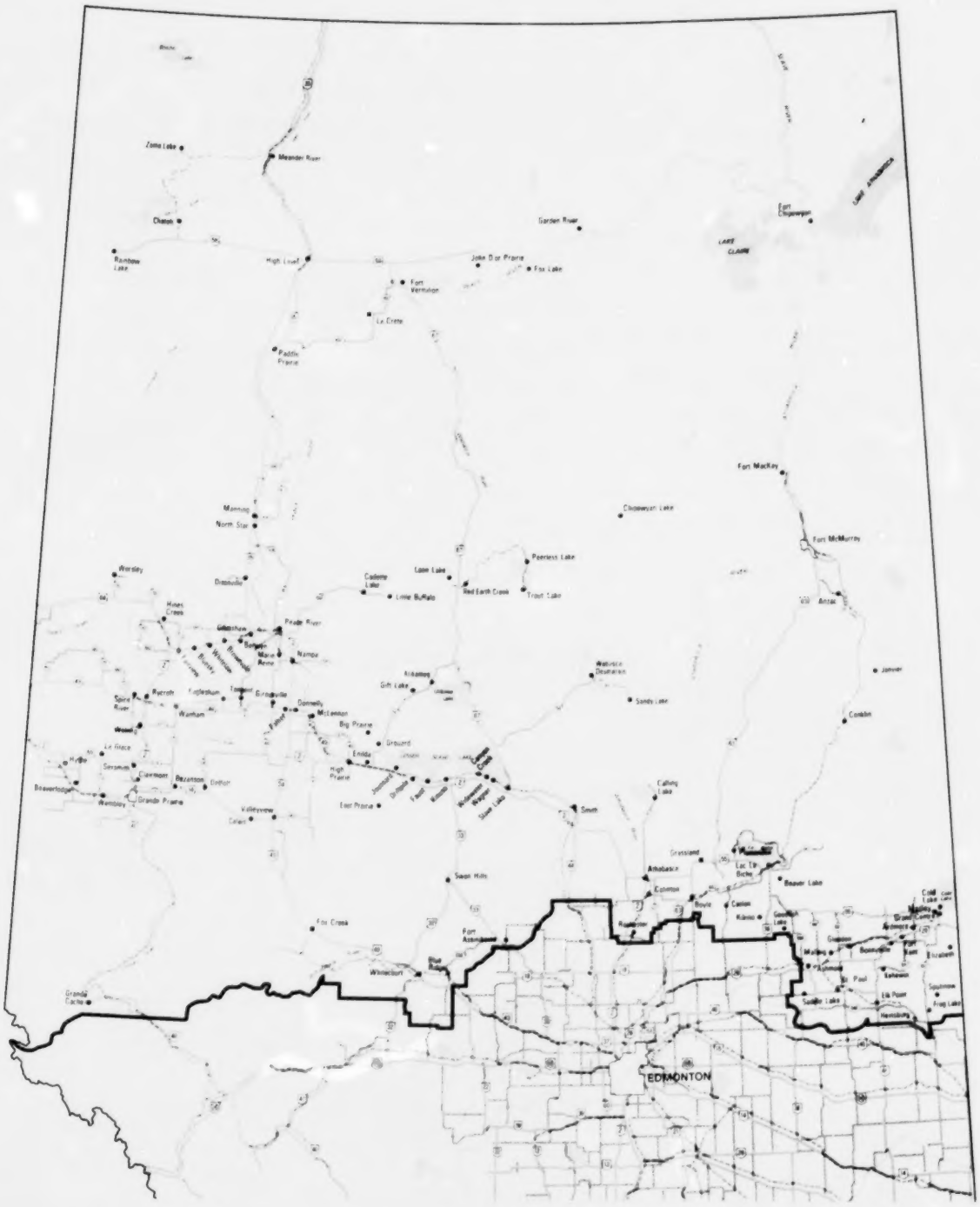
FRED GINGERICH
ATHABASCA

BERNIE HORNBY
FOX CREEK

VINCE RICE
KINUSO

TED SONNTAG
HOTCHKISS

EVELYN THUNDER
ATIKAMEG



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA

COMMUNITIES WITH POPULATION OVER 75 (1981 CANADA CENSUS)

km 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 km

miles 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 miles

PRIMARY HIGHWAY — SECONDARY ROAD - - - - - L.O.C. ROAD - - - - - - - RAILWAY

PRODUCED BY THE ALBERTA BUREAU OF SURVEYING AND MAPPING © 1985

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The Northern Alberta Development Council was initially created in 1963 as a five member advisory body to the provincial government. It was enlarged in 1973 to a membership of ten, and currently consists of eight private citizens appointed on the basis of public nominations, and two elected Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Through its own Act, the Northern Alberta Development Council is charged with the responsibility to "investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta, and to advise the government thereon". The Act makes specific reference to social and economic development, the development of communities and service delivery, and the development of government services and programs.

The Council, at present, has a full-time MLA Chairman and reports to the Executive Council through the Minister responsible for Northern Development.

The Council's primary role is to provide government with a northern point of view on a wide range of issues, supplementing and complementing the perspectives of northern MLAs. A major objective of Council since 1973 has been to increase the amount of public participation in the planning and design of delivery systems for various government services in northern Alberta.

The general purposes that Council wishes to promote are:

- to enhance economic and educational opportunities within northern Alberta in order to encourage young people to stay;
- to enhance the viability of traditional northern small town and rural life;
- to support the desires and aspirations of all residents in northern Alberta for a fair share in the wealth and potential of the area;
- to support the desires of various cultural and ethnic groups within northern Alberta for maintenance of their distinctive heritage.

Through regularly scheduled public meetings and sponsorship of major conferences and seminars, the Council serves as a forum to which residents can express their ideas and concerns regarding development of the North. In addition to receiving briefs at public meetings, the Council can initiate research into particular opportunities or needs, and

often pursues, on behalf of northern residents, efforts toward the development of new programs or co-ordination of the existing service delivery.

The information service provided through the response to briefs received from the public results in the initiation of most Council activities. Nearly 60 per cent of the briefs presented to the Northern Alberta Development Council since 1973 have resulted in positive responses.

Issues considered by the Northern Alberta Development Council during the year under review were many, including natural resource development, economic diversification, small business development, forestry, tourism, agriculture, education, infrastructure systems, health services, preventive social services, manpower needs, and local government concerns.

A Council meeting with various members of the new Provincial Cabinet was held on July 16, 1986. On September 9, 1986, the Council presented a detailed position paper to the Alberta Crop Insurance Review Panel's Hearing in Peace River. In October of 1986, the Council held an intensive retreat in Slave Lake with the Minister responsible for Northern Development to review Council activities and priorities.

On October 29/30/31, 1986, the Council sponsored a Conference on Telecommunications in Northern Alberta. One hundred industry, community and government representatives met in Athabasca to review a Council issues document and prepare recommendations for consideration by the Provincial Cabinet.

The Northern Alberta Development Council serves as a facilitator and catalyst, assisting the line departments of government responsible for the implementation of changes and service improvements. The Council's public participation role over the years has provided an enhanced two-way flow of information, resulting in marked improvements for all northern Albertans.

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

PUBLIC MEETINGS

During 1986/87, the Northern Alberta Development Council held six public meetings: at Berwyn in April, Anzac in June, Bonnyville in August, Calling Lake in September, Clairmont in December and Fort Assiniboine in February. Four other regular monthly meetings were held in Peace River along with a conference, a retreat, a meeting with the Cabinet and a number of special activities.

One hundred and sixty briefs were received from groups and individuals in attendance at the public meetings. Each brief submitted was reviewed by the Council to determine a course of action and forwarded to various departments and agencies of government for consideration and comment. The departmental responses were then discussed by the Council, and a decision made as to whether or not the department's position and or proposed action was appropriate. If the departmental response was felt to be inappropriate, the Council directed the Northern Development Branch to further clarify the issue through Branch directed research, or to undertake discussions with the responsible officials in order to achieve the necessary action. At times, co-ordination of the efforts of a number of departments of government was required. Brief originators were advised of the progress made on each of the ideas or concerns expressed in their submissions.

The results achieved by the Council varied greatly from brief to brief. In several instances the concerns raised were either totally or partially resolved. In some cases, the Council and Branch are continuing to work towards a practical solution which is acceptable to all involved. The current status of any of the briefs submitted to Council is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

BRIEFS

During the year, 15 briefs were received from Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan in the northeast region; 28 from Calling Lake, Desmarais, Fort Assiniboine, Grouard, High Prairie, Joussard, Slave Lake, Smith, Swan Hills, Widewater, and Whitecourt in the central region; 42 from Athabasca, Bonnyville, Boyle, Cherry Grove, Cold Lake, Elk Point, Grand Centre, Lac La Biche, Sputinow and St. Paul in the southeast region; 26 from Berwyn, Fairview, Fort Vermilion, Grimshaw, High Level, Hines Creek, Keg River, Manning, and Peace River in the northwest region; 43 from Beaverlodge, Clairmont, Eaglesham, Grande Cache, Grande Prairie, Hythe, La Glace, McLennan, Rycroft, Sexsmith, Spirit River, Tangent, Valhalla Centre, Valleyview and Wembley in the southwest region; and 6 from Edmonton and other points outside the Northern Alberta Development Council boundary.

RESEARCH AND CO-ORDINATION

Many of the issues brought to the attention of the Northern Alberta Development Council required intensive background work and follow-up activities. As a result, the Council initiated a number of research projects and efforts directed at co-ordination or modification of the delivery of government services in various areas.

Major Council activities in 1986/87 included:

- a review and discussion meeting with Provincial Cabinet ministers on various northern development policy issues
- a meeting with the Minister of Social Services on family violence, day care, volunteers and related concerns
- a meeting with the Minister of Public Works, Supply & Services regarding privatization of government services and local hiring
- a meeting with the Minister of Culture on regional library systems
- a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Utilities on equalized rates, REAs and gas co-ops in northern Alberta
- a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Lands & Wildlife on hardwood development, game ranching, grazing leases and traplines
- information exchange meetings with the British Columbia and Saskatchewan Northern Development Councils on topics of mutual interest
- a meeting with the Director of Native Counselling Services of Alberta on concerns presented in briefs
- a meeting with the Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Career Development and Employment on northern manpower programs
- a major briefing meeting with the Integrated Resource Planning Section of Alberta Forestry, Lands & Wildlife
- initiation of a steering committee to review Downtown Revitalization

- follow-up to Trappers Compensation issues in the Fort McKay and Cold Lake regions

- a review of Tourism Zone Funding

- a background paper on road improvement concerns in the Lakeland Region

- initial work on a major Northern Transportation Study to evaluate present and future needs particularly in the areas of human services, resource access and economic development

- commissioning of a substantive background document on Northern Water Management Issues

- assistance in Alberta Economic Development's review of Federal proposals for airline deregulation in northern Alberta

- participation in the Council on Aging Conference in Fairview

- participation in a Rural Health Care Association Co-Terminous Boundary Study

- support for the Fort Vermilion and Fort Chipewyan Bicentennial projects

- support for a Disease Education Program by the Northern Alberta Alfalfa Seed Association

- support for a Northern Learners' Network Feasibility Study by the Council of Community Education Committees and a CVC remote community library project

- support for the High Prairie Economic Development, Beaverlodge Economic Indicators and St. Paul Needs Assessment projects

- support for a Northern Environmental Education project

- continuation of a three-year travel allowance program to attract medical students to the North for their elective courses

CROP INSURANCE IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

The Northern Alberta Development Council presented a detailed position paper on crop insurance to the hearing of the Alberta Crop Insurance Review Panel in Peace River on September 9, 1986.

In preparation for the hearings, the Council set up a private sector advisory committee to oversee the production of a major technical report by a consultant. Three primary objectives of the advisory committee were:

- to review comparable existing programs in other areas of Canada and the U.S.A. and related crop insurance research

- to undertake a comprehensive survey of northern farmers and Alberta government and agricultural industry professionals to obtain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the existing program and provide recommendations for improvement

- to perform a benefit/cost analysis of the current Canada-Alberta Crop Insurance Program as it affects farmers in the NADC area.

Interviews and discussions were carried out with 157 northern Alberta farmers and 23 industry professionals. Other data were obtained from the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation, Statistics Canada, Alberta Agriculture and the governments of Canada, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and the United States.

Based on questionnaire responses, the five ranked changes most desired by northern farmers were:

- Base coverage on input costs
- Increase in coverage levels
- Provision of spot-loss coverage under the all-risk plans
- Further encouragement of individual coverage
- Provision of more reward for good experience (through higher coverage and lower premiums).

The three main program changes recommended by the professionals were:

- Increase in coverage levels to account for input costs
- Implementation of individual coverage for all producers

- Monitoring of program abuse more closely.

The following set of consolidated program changes were arrived at by 14 focus groups held in different communities throughout the North:

- Coverage should be based on input costs.
- The good experience rating system should be revised.
- Individual coverage should be expanded.

The economic analysis showed that the loss to premium ratio had been higher in southern Alberta between 1981 and 1985 than in the northeast, northwest or Peace River districts. This finding supported a review of risk and payout differences between regions. Insurance has typically been more expensive relative to coverage in the Peace region as compared to the balance of the province.

Based on the findings of the technical report the following recommendations were submitted to the Review Panel by the Northern Alberta Development Council:

- Individual coverage should be made more attractive for producers.

- Coverage should be based on input costs, allowing more flexibility for producers to insure to the level they wish, with producer and farm capabilities taken into consideration.

- The "good experience" rating system should be revised to provide more reward to those producers with a good record of performance. Acts of God in a single year should not eliminate several years of good experience at a rate faster than 25% per year.

- Spot-loss coverage should be allowed under the Crop Insurance Plan.

- The plowdown policy should be reviewed to allow plowdown if the crop is not economical to harvest between July 1 and August 1. This plowdown should result in a summerfallow classification.

- A payment for snowed under crops should be made within the calendar year. Farmers should be allowed an advance on the balance of the snowed under crop.

- A review of insurance rates should be conducted.

- A complete review of program dates by crop should be considered, recognizing possible regional variations.

- If the All Risk program is to be continued in the north, the area should be divided into smaller regions with recognition given to climatic variations and soil productivity.

- More information should be supplied to producers.

In presenting the position paper to the Crop Insurance Review Panel, the Council noted that the North is different and asked that revisions to the existing Canada-Alberta Crop Insurance Program correct certain disadvantages northern farmers face.

Those northern farmers surveyed indicated that they want to earn their living from farming and see crop insurance as an input expense having the sole purpose of being able to recover the costs of production.

Printed copies of both the Council's position paper on crop insurance and "Crop Insurance in Northern Alberta Technical Report" (Deloitte, Haskins & Sells, June, 1986) are available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REVIEW

On a periodic basis the Northern Alberta Development Council holds a retreat to examine its current activities and priorities in northern socio-economic development. In October of 1986 the Council met for two days in Slave Lake with the Minister responsible for Northern Development, Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair.

The Council reviewed its advisory role to the provincial government, critiqued its public meeting/response to briefs process and analyzed its extensive information activities involving conferences, report publication and research and co-ordination activities. A number of operational issues were discussed and the ongoing public participation role of the Council was thoroughly reviewed.

Regarding past priorities, the Council noted the worthwhile efforts achieved regarding the economic development priorities set at the Council Review in 1982. In the last four years these have included Council-sponsored activities on development of new agricultural land, Tourism North Conference, Employment Alternatives Workshop, Seminar on Utilization of Hardwoods in Northern Alberta and the Challenge North Conference.

Maintaining a concentration on economic diversification and a new emphasis on northern awareness projects were among future priorities set by the Council at the conclusion of their meeting. Transportation needs, water management, education, tourism, historical sites, local government enhancement and the need for more program delivery co-ordination in remote communities were also listed.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

The Telecommunications in Northern Alberta Conference, held October 29 - 31, 1986, in Athabasca, evolved as a result of numerous briefs from citizens with concerns related to various aspects of telecommunications. These ranged from requests for inclusion in extended flat rate calling telephone service, to concerns about inadequate television reception, to the need for distance education programs.

The Northern Alberta Development Council's response was to collect and collate input from a wide cross section of the northern population. Following publication of a detailed background document, the Conference brought over 100 northerners together with industry and government leaders for meaningful discussion.

On the first day, Hon. Les Young, Minister of Alberta Technology, Research and Telecommunications, addressed the audience. He explained the goals of his department and expressed a commitment to northern concerns. Mr. Young was followed by Bill Page of W.J. Page and Associates, who discussed in detail the findings of the research report.

Delegates then had the opportunity to tour the Athabasca University campus where telecommunications suppliers and deliverers had set up information and demonstration areas.

In the evening, Ed Polanski, President, QCTV Cablevision Ltd., addressed the gathering on the topic, "The Communications Edge in Northern Alberta."

This address was followed by a teleconference between Ottawa and Athabasca in which John Feltmate, of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission; Mr. Polanski; and Bill Ashe of Cancom Satellite Network Services, were linked by satellite broadcast and audio return. The participants discussed "Satellites and Scrambling."

Day two began with a panel of experts on the topic of distance education. Terry Morrison, President, Athabasca University; Peter Senchuk, President, ACCESS Alberta;

and Des Berghofer, Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Advanced Education, presented talks on different aspects of this topic.

This session was followed by an address on "Telephone Issues and Options" presented by H.M. Neldner, President, Alberta Government Telephones. His talk dealt with the four major areas of concern identified in the background document: lower long distance charges, extended flat rate calling; increased individual line service and greater access to 911. In noting that Alberta's telecommunications system ranks among the world's most modern, he told participants that the Alberta Government with AGT will be spending $500 million in the next few years to upgrade the system and to see that every Albertan is better served by telephone.

The luncheon address on day two was given by Jack Hillier, Vice-President, Northern Telecom Canada Ltd. He spoke on "Revitalization and the Role of Telecommunications."

In the afternoon, television issues and delivery approaches were discussed in concurrent sessions. Taking part were: Ray Flett, District Manager, the Federal Government Department of Communications; Dick Dutka, Regional Engineer, CBC; Gary Christopherson, President, Glomma Cablevision Ltd.; Clint Buehler, Director, Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta; and Del Harbourne, Mayor, Manning.

Also discussed was Northern Distance Education and panelists in this session were: Dan Vandermeulen, Vice-President of Alberta Vocational Centre in Grouard; Karl Gongas, President, Community Vocational Centre, Slave Lake; Ross Paul, Vice-President, Athabasca University; and Brent Pickard, Director, Alberta Advanced Education.

The other session's topic was "Existing and New Telephone Service." J.D. McDonald, Vice-President, Alberta Government Telephones; Harry Stech, Assistant Vice-President, also of AGT; and Del Lippert, President of NovAtel Communications Ltd., were the speakers.

On the third day, Bill Page had a further opportunity to tie his survey's findings to the events of the past few days. Then Bob Elliott, Chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, presented a summation of the Conference and thanked delegates for their participation.

Following the Conference, the Northern Alberta Development Council presented the following recommendations for consideration by government and various agencies:

Recommendation 1

> Universal delivery of Alberta ACCESS NETWORK should be encouraged as a goal for northern Alberta.

A number of northern communities lack the necessary infrastructure to receive ACCESS NETWORK. This places them at a disadvantage in terms of receiving educational television programs.

A need also exists to increase the distribution of ACCESS NETWORK through existing rebroadcast and cable facilities in northern communities.

Recommendation 2

> Alberta Government Telephones (AGT) should institute on-going information activities with northern groups and citizens.

The participation of AGT personnel at the Conference was very well received by northern delegates. The NADC views AGT's personal exposure to northern issues and concerns as an important developmental approach. This style of approach should be continued as an integral part of program delivery.

Recommendation 3

> Alberta Government Telphones (AGT) should proceed as soon as possible with the Rural Individual Line Service program.

It was voiced at the Conference that individual telephone line service is important to rural businesses and farms in the North. Northerners want to see that the program is brought on-stream quickly and in a manner that does not disadvantage the more remote areas of the Province.

Recommendation 4

> Special arrangements should be considered by Alberta Government Telephones (AGT) to allow the Extended Flat Rate Calling (EFRC) program to better serve northern regions.

In considering extensions to EFRC limits, AGT should examine more closely established patterns in grouping those centres which share common economic and social trading patterns.

Recommendation 5

> Alberta Government Telephones (AGT) should make efforts to restore local telephone services to users, particularly in remote and isolated communities, who previously defaulted on their telephone payments.

The NADC perceives telephone access to be a prerequisite need for continuing development in the North. In places where misunderstanding over the use of telephone exists, steps should be taken at the community level to educate people about the opportunities and responsibilities that accompany the use of the telephone.

Recommendation 6

> Alberta Advanced Education should assume the lead role in co-ordinating the development of northern distance education.

Whereas Alberta Advanced Education is taking some worthwhile steps in the co-ordination of distance education province-wide, the NADC feels that special effort is required to serve the dispersed population of the North. The Department's role in this area would involve conducting a needs assessment for northern distance education, plus the arrangement of planning meetings between the involved parties.

ACCESS NETWORK, Athabasca University, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, NAIT, Grant McEwan College, Alberta Vocational Centres, local school authorities, Community Vocational Centres, and others such as Alberta Government Telephones should be involved in any continuing Alberta Advanced Education initiative in this area.

Recommendation 7

> It is essential that agencies involved in the delivery of distance education continue the process of dialogue and planning which is now underway.

The resources and technology exist for distance education to take place; however, co-ordination of delivery is needed to make the system work more effectively. The best dollar-value of distance education accrues from the sharing of ideas and approaches

between the involved educational institutions, educational programs and the suppliers of technology hardware.

Recommendation 8

> Steps should continue to be taken to increase the provision of licensed Canadian television signals in northern Alberta.

A number of northern communities receive no television, only a single Canadian channel or only unlicensed American channels. To remedy these problems the provincial and federal governments will have to increase efforts with individual communities and the private suppliers of television to secure enhanced, licensed, Canadian television services in the North.

Recommendation 9

> The Provinical Government should examine the provision of research assistance for the assessment of telecommunications needs in rural areas and smaller northern communities.

The largest gap in telecommunications services exists in the remote communities. Advance planning from a community perspective would identify the most efficient way to develop and co-ordinate gap-filling services. This step would ensure that duplication does not occur between groups, particularly in the areas of television and distance education.

Recommendation 10

> A non-profit community radio pilot project should be developed to assess the potential role of community radio in northern Alberta.

Remote communities in the North often have limited facilities for sharing local news. A pilot project would allow the communities to assess whether radio is an effective way to fill this informational gap, plus provide cultural and entertainment oriented programs.

Recommendation 11

> A task force should be established to investigate the ways and means of increasing the distribution and choice of FM radio signals in the North.

While FM radio was identified as a top priority need for northerners, neither government nor the private sector have sufficient information on how to improve FM delivery. A task force involving government and private industry would play an important role in the highlighting of constraints and innovative approaches to FM radio distribution in northern Alberta.

Recommendation 12

The northern public requires more information on how to achieve low cost telephone access to government.

Many northerners would benefit from increased awareness of how to approach government through the use of RITE Centres, Zenith numbers and 1-800 numbers. More information of this kind provided by Alberta Public Works, Supply & Services would enhance the use of government services in the North.

A printed copy of the Telecommunications in Northern Alberta Conference Report is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

GUIDE TO BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

Because of the current economic climate, the Northern Alberta Development Council undertook during the year under review to provide advice directed toward servicing opportunities in the important oil and gas industry of northern Alberta.

The Council prepared and distributed a handbook called "A Guide to Business Opportunities in the Oil and Gas Industry in Northern Alberta." The handbook indicates various ways and means for both business and resource companies to strike a more mutually and economically beneficial approach to northern energy sector opportunities.

The Council felt that by adopting more efficient methods of approach to the industry, local suppliers and servicers should be able to enhance their chances of doing business and improving their profit margins.

Divided into five major sections, the handbook indicates ways to recognize business opportunities even in areas where there is no high visibility and no opportunity for face-to-face contact between the local businessperson and the oil companies.

One fact stressed is the necessity for the small entrepreneur to do his homework, to find out what is going on in the industry and to maintain contacts. The handbook explains the way to do these things.

One section goes into detail regarding planning and provides a "Business Basics Checklist" as well as information on how to produce a business plan.

The boom and bust nature of the oil and gas industry makes long-term planning difficult, the handbook concedes. However, the informed and prepared oil patch participant stands the best chance of survival, and being informed and prepared involves short-term planning.

The greatest similarity among businesses in difficulty is a general lack of planning, the handbook advises.

An important piece of advice in the book is: "Even though the emphasis in this handbook is on the oil and gas industry, it is important to remain aware of the fact that, regardless of the industry being examined, a business is a business is a business. And every business must be looked after in much the same way."

Another section tells how to submit a contract bid. This is set out in steps which range from the basic "How to get on the bidders' list" to "Debriefing" after the bid.

Because communities have a vested interest in businesses located within their boundaries, the municipality itself has a major role to play in stimulating business. For this reason, the handbook offers advice and ideas about the way to inspire community involvement. It also suggests setting up a community business directory and tells how to do this.

One of the most important sections is the chapter headed "Surviving in Northern Alberta's Oil and Gas Industry." Survival management strategy outlined includes:

- Get the first contract.
  The handbook advises liaison with the local banker even before that first contract is bid for and suggests that the banker can help devise a strategy.

- Be conservative.
  Because the oil and gas industry is risky and subject to factors beyond local control, it is necessary not to become spread too thin and to diversify the customer base.

- Know the strengths and weaknesses of your business.

  An honest and realistic appraisal of a business by its owner can allow areas of strength to be exploited and areas of weakness to be resolved.

- Perform seasonal projections.

  Planning ahead is the key. Setting goals and objectives is also important as is working with a projected cash flow. Well-equipped managers are those who know in general terms the status of their business all the time.

- Diversify clientele.

  Businesses that work exclusively with one client are subject to the fortunes and failures of that client.

- Use the network.

  Keep up contacts and be visible to potential clients.

- Know your banker.

  Make your banker a supportive ally of your business rather than someone you call on only when you need money.

- Operate with sound business principles.

- Learn from mistakes.

- Know your product or service.

- Understand your customer.

  Small businesses cannot afford market research and must rely on first- and second-hand knowledge picked up from personal contacts and the grapevine.

- Be punctual and reliable.

The handbook also deals with financing and says: "Most of us approach the subject of borrowing money with a sense of fear and a feeling of inferiority. Once again the business plan is the key to your loan proposal."

Also advised, is the use of professional services like accountants and lawyers. As well, a long list of oil and gas associations exists as does assistance and counselling from both the provincial and federal governments. Government agencies and associations are listed in the handbook along with phone numbers and addresses.

Copies of the publication are available from the Northern Development Branch at Peace River.

A BOARD MEMBER'S HANDBOOK

In the year under review, the Council widely distributed a handbook to assist the many volunteers who became directors on community and agency boards in northern Alberta. The handbook, which has been well received, is set out as a problem-solving guide.

Council members have long been aware that participating on community boards can be challenging and is sometimes even difficult. Although often boards work very well, sometimes they do not.

As outlined in the handbook, the basic role of a board of directors is to guide services so that policies and decisions best reflect local circumstances. The handbook seeks to offer guidance based on the following tenets:

- Effective community service requires citizen participation.
- It is not necessary to be an expert to participate.
- Many community people have the skills to be volunteer board members.
- People may ask to become involved as well as be invited.
- Membership on a board can be a learning experience.
- Better informed boards make better decisions.
- Opinion, attitudes and everyday experience are important elements of the decision-making process.

The handbook covers the following areas related to serving on a board:

- Why join a board?
- How do you join a board?
- How can the agency itself help you decide whether on not you want to be on its board?
- How can the agency help you in your new role?
- What is the board's role?
- What is the board member's role?
- What is the chair's role?
- What is the agency director's role?
- What is the staff's role?
- What is the volunteer's role?

- How does the board relate to the volunteer?
- Recognition and appreciation of volunteers.
- How do you evaluate community service?
- How do you leave a board?
- Index of common problems.
- Common problems and suggested remedies.
- What makes a board successful?

Some highlights on the chapter devoted to the board member's role are:

- A board will not be effective unless each member has a clear sense of how to participate. This means having enough knowledge, initiative and analytical ability to say what you do know, to ask when you don't understand, and to challenge when a decision doesn't seem right.

- A board member must be a full partner with the board chairperson and work with the rest of the board so that it functions as a unit to ensure the best possible service to the community.

- Board members are best used as "intelligent advisers." Like all effective advisers, members must draw on their own background and experience.

In discussing the role of the volunteer, the handbook makes the important point that volunteers are the lifeblood of community agencies. It goes on to note that boards and agency staffs quite often forget that volunteers are just that; they are not obligated to serve and can withdraw at any time. There is a strong suggestion that volunteers receive recognition and appreciation in a formal and public way.

A hard-hitting section of the handbook deals with problems faced by many boards. These include overly emotional meetings, negative rumors, tension between director and board or between chairman and board, and boards that discuss issues but never reach conclusions. The handbook deals with 13 of these kinds of problems in detail and suggests ways to resolve them. For example, what does a board member do if he/she must take an unpopular stand in terms of the community?

The handbook does not pull punches. It points out that there comes a time when even the best and most dedicated member must and should leave the board. It tells how to do this and explains why this is good for both the agency and the board. Pointing out that other community members must be allowed a chance to serve, the handbook also

stresses that constant member renewal is necessary to keep up with changing needs and ideas.

A board will not be effective unless all concerned can determine and understand the role of the board and of its directors. In defining this statement, the handbook lists the board's duties as follows: serving as the agency's legal authority; managing funds; hiring support staff; setting policy and goals; managing and delegating; relating to the community.

The handbook concludes that being a volunteer board member is an important and satisfying role but adds that good board experiences don't just happen — they result from having a vision to improve things and then signing up for the job.

"A Board Member's Handbook" is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

A NEW BEGINNING

Increasing concern about the 'aging phenomenon' of northern Alberta's populace resulted in the formation of a Northern Alberta Development Council steering committee to examine geriatric needs. The Council joined with the Peace River Health Unit to obtain concrete data on a specific geographic area as a basis for discussion. The steering committee undertook a detailed survey of more than 400 seniors, many of them pioneers of the Peace River area.

The interviews and assessment study report were the first of their kind in the province and have generated a great deal of interest. The report, "A New Beginning" noted the following points:

- Seniors tend to be spectators rather than participants.
- Many are lonely and/or depressed.
- No specialized mental health services for the elderly exist in the Peace region.
- Preventive care is often inadequate.
- Seniors 'at-risk' should receive monitoring.
- Much information fails to reach native people in particular.

Another problem identified was the overlapping of programs. Sometimes several different agencies serve the same client or deliver similar programs.

A surprising finding was that a full 35% of the agency sample was not completely aware of major health programs available in the region. Ten per cent of these had no knowledge of the programs offered.

The report indicated a need for program reviews in such areas as:

- physiotherapy departments in hospitals
- opthalmology services
- transportation services
- handyman services
- recreational programming
- programs involving health-related issues such as foot care and reflexology
- religious support groups
- visiting services from church groups
- educational programs

Analysis of the responses led the committee to several conclusions. Among these were:

- Women currently make up the majority of the 65+ population. As well, since about half of the respondents remain married and in their homes, programming to assist in caring for spouses may be needed. Education regarding available options as well as special accommodation for couples may be needed.
- Support groups and other programs for the bereaved are important.
- Information distributed by mail may not reach its target audience because of a low literacy rate among some seniors.
- Programs to explain the aging process and a realistic picture of old age must be presented.
- Seniors would like to be involved in planning that affects them.
- Many seniors over-rely on their physicians.
- As the population ages even more, doctors will find their patient loads top-heavy with seniors. They should be prepared for this eventuality.
- Seniors suffer from stress when they are referred to specialists in cities.
- Basic services do not exist in most remote communities.
- Since people wish to move into institutions only when they can no longer cope on the outside, planners must expect them to be older and more in need of care than anticipated.
- If facilities were available and integrated into most communities, seniors might be more willing to be institutionalized.
- Adult day-care could assist in senior independence.

After reviewing and analyzing the study, the committee developed a set of recommendations involving:

- sharing of information on a formal basis among local program deliverers
- involvement of seniors in planning and programming that affects them
- consideration of limited literacy levels among seniors when preparing print materials and availability of these materials through health care outlets
- identification of local concerns
- review of seniors' needs on a regular basis
- flexible programming to meet local needs
- encouragement to community groups to consider senior volunteer input
- input from seniors regarding transportation modes and systems
- redefinition of senior centres
- assistance to families in their supportive role
- use of regional medical specialists when possible
- changing housing needs
- distance factor when constructing projects that will involve seniors (hospitals, lodges, etc.)
- greater awareness of aging process and adoption of holistic approaches where possible
- pre-retirement education
- community domestic and handyman services
- establishment of a special committee to address the needs of seniors in remote areas
- special assistance in completing documentation

Printed copies of this report are available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

STUDENT BURSARY PROGRAM

Created in 1974, the Northern Alberta Development Council Student Bursary Program is designed to encourage young people to obtain technical training or professional qualifications that are in high demand in northern areas of the province.

Students assisted through the program are obligated to work in northern Alberta, preferably in remote and isolated locations, for at least one year for each year of bursary support received.

The Bursary Program is administered by the Students Finance Board. A selection committee, made up of four members of the Northern Alberta Development Council and one representative each from the Metis Association of Alberta, the Students Finance Board and Alberta Career Development & Employment, is responsible for the establishment of guidelines and selection of candidates for bursary support.

On the basis of criteria including need, northern experience and special circumstances, the Selection Committee granted bursary assistance in 1986/87 to 153 applicants for a total of $610,750. The present bursary rates are up to $3,500 for single students and up to $6,000 per academic year for married students. Since the inception of the program 1,725 bursaries have been awarded to students at a total expenditure of $5.5 million. Bursaries have been awarded in many areas including health care, education, social services, agriculture, law, business-related studies and engineering. Most of the returning graduates have remained in the North to contribute to the growing and diverse economy of the region.

NEW COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

In late 1986, through public advertisements in all northern newspapers, nominations were solicited from northern community groups and organizations for nominees to replace retiring public members of the Council.

In March, 1987, the Provincial Cabinet, through the Minister responsible for Northern Development, the Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair, appointed three new members to the Northern Alberta Development Council. The membership for 1987/88 includes:

Bob Elliott, MLA, Beaverlodge, Chairman
Gene Dextrase, High Level, Vice-Chairman
Mike Beaver, Wabasca
Mary Bennett, Elk Point
John Drobot, MLA, St. Paul
Marcel Ducharme, Bonnyville
Fred Gingerich, Athabasca
Bernie Hornby, Fox Creek
Don Keith, Fort McMurray
Ted Sonntag, Hotchkiss

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

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The purpose of the Northern Development Branch is to participate in developing and maintaining a socio-economic environment in northern Alberta which gives maximum opportunity for inhabitants of the area to grow and prosper.

In achieving its purpose, the Branch provides all the administrative and technical support activities required by the Northern Alberta Development Council, and attempts to implement a flexible strategy of achieving specific socio-economic improvements in northern Alberta.

The Branch seeks to advance the development of human and natural resources in northern Alberta, as well as aiding in community development goals such as local decision-making and planning. It delves into a wide variety of issues as a result of briefs received by the Northern Alberta Development Council, e.g., agriculture, resource development, manpower training, community infrastructure, education, communications services, housing and transportation.

The **Research and Analysis Section** of the Branch provides the review and planning function for northern Alberta socio-economic improvements. Basic research is performed and background and position papers prepared in support of the Council in its role as an advisory body to government. Examples of major projects undertaken by the section on behalf of the Council during the fiscal year included: review papers and studies in the areas of crop insurance, family violence, privatization, manpower requirements, regional resource development, power services, tourism, airline deregulation, environmental education and transportation developments.

The purpose of the **Program Co-ordination Section** is to facilitate and assist in the co-ordination of activities of various line departments and agencies to achieve maximum opportunities for socio-economic development in northern Alberta. In the area of northern co-ordination efforts on behalf of the Council, extensive staff time was spent on interdepartmental liaison activities involving business development projects, transportation planning, water and sewer delivery, remote community economic development, local government services, communication needs, resource development plans, commercial trapping and fishing, infrastructure services, social employment programs and vocational training.

Although not directly involved in Council activities, the **Agreement Administration Section** provides information to the members as required. The purpose of the Section is to implement the Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement over the 1986 - 91

time period. This involves assessing applications and undertaking the necessary financial disbursement and control procedures.

The **Council Administration Section** provides technical and logistical support to the Chairman's office and to individual Council members for the monthly meetings. During 1986/87 six public meetings, four closed meetings, a conference, a retreat and a number of special activities were organized. Detailed follow-up to the Student Bursary Program, assistance in the public nomination process and appointment of three new Council members were also undertaken. One hundred and sixty briefs were received by Council during the fiscal year, and background documentation, interdepartmental liaison activities and draft responses were undertaken in each case by the Section staff.

A significant amount of the Branch's time during the year under review was related to preparation and follow-up to the Council Priorities Review and the Telecommunications Conference held in Athabasca.

Other major Branch follow-up activities arising from the briefs and/or Council initiated requests involved: Zama nursing station, Rycroft arena, AVC Grouard, Fairview airport, Fort McMurray area native issues, Anzac Community Hall, Syncrude negotiations, EFRC, Procter & Gamble Reserve at Manning, Manning nursing home, Highway #64, Highway #55, Canada/Alberta Tourism Agreement, rural single line service, Calling Lake community concerns, Calling Lake timber berths, Calling Lake/Sandy Lake road, rural police services, AGT services in Boyle, Fort Chipewyan Winter Road, Lac La Biche Mission, northern housing, District Agriculturalist services, agricultural research, Highway #49, satellite TV, small school funding, Shaftesbury ferry, NARP plant, medical recruitment, industrial use of water, Slave Lake tourism development, Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, Hythe community education, Elk Point senior citizens, CKUA radio, Swan Hills assessment, northern tourism zones, Fort Assiniboine concerns, Whitecourt economic development.

In its work as a co-ordinator and facilitator and, particularly, as a supplier of technical support to the Northern Alberta Development Council, the Branch continued to maintain a vital communications link between northern people and government.